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"If you want peace, prepare for war." (Roman proverb)

"You cannot simultaneously prevent war and prepare for war.

Einstein

Resolution: Both preparing for war, and failing to prepare for war, are highly inadequate ways of preventing war.

Preparing for war may be, in the very short run, more likely to prevent imminent war than failing to prepare for it: a lesser evil (than war). (That might have been true in the Thirties, as is generally claimed. Yet even then, mere preparations--they were made in Britain, actually on a larger scale for aircraft than in Germany--were not likely to deter Hitler. And more offensive actions looked so dangerous as to be virtually precluded at the time; hindsight here has been very unrealistic).

Or it may not be. Depending on circumstances, and on the ways that preparations for war are made (e.g., more or less offensively threatening to the adversary), and what policies actually accompany a failure to prepare for war, one or the other may seem the more likely to lead to or to prevent war.

But when it comes to addressing the fundamental causes of war and to reducing the likelihood of its occurrence or recurrence over the long run, then it is never enough either to prepare for war, or--like some pacifist slogans in the Thirties--simply to refuse to prepare for war. Nor can this be made good by preparing for war on a bigger or better scale.

If they are to address the larger problem of achieving peace and maintaining it over a long run, then either preparing for war or failing to prepare for it would have to be part of a much larger, more complex and diverse, multi-dimensional policy and set of programs. And the question would arise whether, in the short run or even in the long, preparing for war might be conflictual with or even preclusive of conceiving or implementing other aspects of the strategy of peace that are more fundamental, essential. (That question is less likely to arise with the option of failing to prepare for war: it is more obviously compatible with the long-run "practice of peacemaking." Still, in the short run--as in the Thirties, perhaps the single compelling example historically of a short period when absolute pacifism seems even less adequate than "preparedness" (e.g., British air defenses: radar and fighter planes and AA)--the reverse may be true.

getting
attention
for,
modifying
support
for, other
aspects

However, by focussing on the single example of the Thirties and on future hypothetical cases which might present similar circumstances and options, we lose sight of the larger problem of preventing war over a longer run: especially, nuclear war, i.e., globally catastrophic war.

The "problem of deterrence" has in every historical period since 1939--and every year of the past 50--distracted attention from an overwhelmingly more important problem, at that very moment, of reducing the overall likelihood of war, crises, dangerous preparations for war, and readiness for catastrophic escalation of conflicts. And it has distracted attention and effort from opportunities to move toward the larger goal--opportunities much larger in some years than in others--but always, from options for peacemaking efforts incomparably more promising than the purely military armament and traditional or confrontational diplomacy being pursued at that moment.

Indeed, pursuit of the single goal of "deterrence"--whether of conventional or of nuclear attack or "provocation"--has created institutions, attitudes, goals, activities, a whole class of militarized officials, consultants and opinion-makers, that have a vested interest in pursuing solely military "solutions" and which directly oppose pursuing or even conceiving or considering or thinking about other approaches that are far more fundamental, promising, and essential to achieving both national and global security.

specific.
e.g. 1961-62
-63-64
(Gilpatrick)

Thus, even in crises when military development and preparations seems to be part of the short-run solution, it comes at a cost, a danger: of consolidating attitudes and interest groups that actively oppose ways of thinking and awareness and active measures that address the larger, long-run problem effectively.

In every year of the nuclear age, testing, production, deployment and threat of nuclear weapons has been, and should have been seen, for each of the nations undertaking it, part of the problem, not part of the solution, of national security.

This might, conceivably and hypothetically, not have been so. If the past circumstances had been different than they were--specifically, if they had been what officials of the respective nations mistakenly believed or falsely claimed them to be--then there might have been a both plausible and valid case for acquiring nuclear weapons as part of a solution to a security problem. But that was never, not once, the case, not in any one year or for any nation. And least of all with respect to the United States, or the Soviet Union.

Above all, the rationales that each of these superpowers accepted--some publicly, some privately--for valuing nuclear weapons applied across the board to situations facing as-yet-non-

nuclear states. I.e., they legitimized and encouraged acquisition of nuclear weapons, and various uses of them, in a very broad set of states. This set the stage for widespread proliferation, threats, and regional nuclear wars or terrorism, when plutonium became much more widely available. And thanks in large part to the Atoms for Peace promotion of nuclear energy (itself, a legitimating public relations cover for US reliance on nuclear weapons) that time is now.

Aside from providing rationales and plutonium, the practices of the nuclear states virtually precluded their leading--or even being motivated to lead--an effective effort against proliferation and nuclear weapons use. Or from taking steps to give up the privileges of the nuclear club, to restrict their own reliance on and freedom of action with respect to nuclear weapons production and threat: steps of mutual self-restraint that are prerequisite to leadership against the general nuclear threat, or even to participation in such a campaign.

Thus, the doctrine and practice of deterrence has not only been inadequate, it has been fatally costly to efforts actually to preclude nuclear war or the large-scale non-nuclear war that could lead to it. Its dangers have greatly exceeded even its hypothetical, claimed, advantages: which have been consistently and uniformly misrepresented and divorced from actual circumstances, opportunities, and dangers.

That is true today, as acutely as it has ever been true in the past.

Thus, despite its plausibility in terms of certain hypothetical, narrowly-defined situations which have never yet obtained in reality, the doctrine and pursuit of deterrence should at last be seen as being, now and foreseeably, part of the problem, not the solution. It should be discarded: not because it could never, under any hypothetical circumstances, define plausibly a "lesser evil", but because it persists in being a fatal cover, distraction, obstacle and active instrument of opposition to policies that truly address the problem of security in the nuclear age.

Nuclear weapons, and deterrence doctrine, have been continuously iatrogenic.

"really existing deterrent policies" have always been a snare, a danger, a cover, based on delusion, a barrier to much more promising policies. They have led to a steady lowering of global security, and with it, the national security of the states pursuing them. And this is not a coincidence. The measures they call for and the states of mind and vested interests they induce almost inevitably work against an awareness and approaches that would actually increase security both in the short and the long run.

[compare: air strikes in Bosnia. Ending the arms embargo for the Muslims (as contrasted with really enforcing an embargo on the Serbs). refusing to recognize any valid interests or realistic fears of the Serbs--e.g., against the Croats, or against dominant fundamentalist Muslims, in a way that would permit a genuine coordinated policy with Russians. Seeing the Serbs as only terrorists, and as the only terrorists, when we and allies use terrorism just as freely and on just as large a scale when it suits us (see Croat expulsions of Serbs, with rape and murder, in Krajina, with our encouragement, praise and celebration). And our tolerance for Israeli first-use threats, as for our own].

Thus, I don't deny--as do pacifists and nuclear pacifists--that there are hypothetical circumstances (some of which have plausibly been claimed and believed to exist at various moments) which make a case for deterrence plausible (though rarely if ever, the actual carrying out of deterrent threats). Just as the Thirties provide a plausibility problem for absolute pacifists. But the singular example of the confrontation with Hitler [and the supposed lesson that the Allies should have invaded Germany to counter occupation of the Rhineland--or at least, acted within the Rhineland (was that possible?)] has been used to prolong the policies of World War II throughout the next half-century.

Such policies should never, at any moment, have been the whole of our security policy, or even the main part. And the actual nuclear policies we followed should not have been part at all--they should have been resisted and rejected, at every single point--as being actually the major, almost the only real threats to our security and survival.

We must, urgently, transcend the paradigm of "deterrence": and of "national security" as it has been conceived.

This is the time for a paradigm shift. But such shifts do not simply come when they are needed, nor even when circumstances for them seem permissive. And the problems of shift in the social sciences and politics, and mass psychology and priorities, are different and much more intractable than in the physical sciences. That is our challenge.

Deterrence has never, even in the short run, promised a guarantee, a certainty, of avoiding nuclear war: any more than does any particular program of peacemaking. And in reality, deterrent policies for the US have in virtually every period been so provocative and dangerous that we would have been safer simply to forego them: when one looks at their longer-run consequences even within past decades. Still, simply foregoing them was never an adequate or best policy either.